

History...Youth safety laws and programs

Citizens have always been concerned about youth safety and violence reduction. These are some recent state and federal policy initiatives addressing this concern.

1982 Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee

"In moving forward, we have the power to make choices about what values to bring with us from our past, and what we leave behind."

—Governor Gary Locke
Youth Safety Summit Remarks
August 19, 1998

The committee monitors state compliance with the Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and awards federal funds for delinquency prevention, treatment of juveniles in the juvenile justice system, and juvenile delinquency reduction among high risk youth. In 1997, approximately \$2.2 million funded 63 projects and systems improvements.

Innovative Demonstration Projects—These projects require an objective, independent evaluation of the proposal to determine effectiveness. Examples include runaways/status offenders, community restorative responses to juvenile crime and violence, delinquency prevention, and alternatives to secure confinement.

Local Development Projects—The committee considers requests from local advisory committees to develop juvenile justice services coordination for delinquency prevention and systems improvement.

Juvenile Justice System Improvements—The committee grants funding for technical assistance, training, and research projects.

1989 Washington State Omnibus Alcohol and Controlled Substances Act

Twenty new programs were funded by this act to make schools and communities healthier, safer places in which to live and work. Here are two examples:

School Security Enhancement—The state provides grants to hire or contract for security personnel, develop school security projects or enhance existing projects. This includes supervision in school bus loading and unloading areas, hallways, school grounds, cafeterias, parking lots, and after-school functions; investigation of vandalism, theft, gang activity, drug activity, assault, and referrals to appropriate agencies; liaison with school district prevention/intervention specialists, local police, child protective services staff, juvenile justice, and other community organizations dealing with youth. Funding is \$5.87 million for the 1997–99 Biennium.

Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention Services—These services are offered in schools to reach high risk students and their families. Problem behavior and violence often begin with substance abuse at home. Early prevention and intervention at school help reduce this risk. Family members and students are referred for drug and alcohol abuse treatment. These students receive back to school transition help. The program improves the classroom environment for students and teachers, and helps students recognize their academic and personal potential. Funding is approximately \$9.5 million for the 1997–99 Biennium.

“The basis for everything is safety and survival.”

—Superintendent Terry Bergeson
Quoting Abraham Maslow
Youth Safety Summit Remarks
August 19, 1998

1992 Youth Violence Prevention and Intervention

This program supports community services, offers young people job training, vocational programs, peer mentoring, counseling, recreational programs, and educational assistance. These programs include school re-entry, job placement, and completion of drug treatment and rehabilitation. Community goals include reducing on-campus violence, neighborhood violence, and weapons at schools. Over \$850,000 in combined state and federal funds support 20 separate programs.

1993 Washington State Gun-Free Schools Act

This law establishes a state policy banning guns on school property. Schools must expel students who possess a firearm on school premises—including transportation provided by schools—for no less than one year, and must refer these students to law enforcement. School districts are required to report all incidents involving weapons on school property to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. This agency must compile and report this information annually to the Legislature and the Governor.

1994 Goals 2000 Federal Program

Under this law, all schools receiving federal funds will promote nationwide education reform to improve the quality of learning and teaching in the classroom and the workplace. This law provides a framework for the reauthorization of all federal education programs, including Improving America's Schools Act. The national education goals to be achieved by the year 2000 include:

Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities—All schools will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol. Schools will offer a disciplined environment that is conducive to learning.

1994 Safe and Drug-Free Schools and Communities

This program coordinates federal, state, and community resources, and involves parents. Total funding is approximately \$9 million for the current federal fiscal year.

Funding for Schools—(80 percent) funds drug and violence prevention curricula, comprehensive health education, mentoring programs, conflict management programs, counseling programs, information dissemination, and professional development. Up to 10 percent of funds can be used to purchase metal detectors or hire security personnel. School district enrollment guides allocation of 70 percent of these funds. School districts with the greatest need for more funding receive the remaining 30 percent.

Funding for Communities—(20 percent) supports local law enforcement, community mobilization efforts, and programs to prevent and treat substance abuse and violence problems. Funds support a broad range of community services that encourage citizens to work together for the well being of the community and local safety. These federal funds are combined with state funding under the 1989 Omnibus Alcohol and Controlled Substances Act. The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development allocates funds. The annual budget is approximately \$3.5 million.

*"The Summit Report
is a starting point for
the future."*

—Superintendent Terry Bergeson
Youth Safety Summit Remarks
August 19, 1998

Sources

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1994 Public Health Improvement Plan

The Washington State Department of Health first published this report in 1994. The chapter on youth violence assesses it as a public health problem. It presents intervention strategies and outcome standards to reduce youth violence by the year 2000.

1994 Youth Violence Reduction Act

This legislation increased restrictions on firearms, penalties for violent crimes, and approached violence as a public health problem. It also stressed education in nonviolent means for resolving conflicts.

Community Public Health and Safety Networks—These grass roots organizations were formed to reduce or prevent problem behaviors, including youth violence. Networks assess strengths and concerns in communities, research effective strategies, develop solutions that use local assets, and address problems to improve outcomes for children, youth, and families. The networks support development of new programs; review existing programs, laws and regulations; and recommend changes to state and local policies. Today, 53 networks cover every area of the state, including ten tribal networks. Each network is governed by a board of 23 citizens representing a broad spectrum of the local community.

1995 The "Becca Bill"

This legislation, named for a teenage runaway, was designed to help parents, courts, and law enforcement reunite families. Assessment and treatment focus on keeping families together whenever possible. It includes placement services for children and youth at-risk.

Tracking Attendance and Unexcused Absences—When unexcused absences reach certain thresholds, schools are required to intervene with students and families. This may include juvenile court petitions and court-ordered intervention.

1996 Conflict Resolution Training for Teachers

The 1996 Legislature funded nine Educational Service Districts to offer training in conflict resolution, anger management, and violence prevention. In 1996 and 1997, over 4200 educators learned how to teach these skills to students.

1997 Juvenile Justice Act

This law increased penalties for juvenile crimes, gave juvenile courts more discretion, and authorized funds for proven interventions to reduce reoffending.